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**Constructing ‘Homeland’ and ‘Target’ \***  
**Cities in the ‘War on Terror’**

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## **.Introduction**

Programmes of organized, political violence have always been legitimized and sustained through complex imaginative geographies. This term – following Foucault (1970), Said (1978) and Gregory (1995) – denotes the ways in which imperialist societies are constructed through normalizing, binary judgements about both ‘foreign’ and colonized territories and the ‘home’ spaces which sit at the ‘heart of empire’.

Such imaginative geographies tend to be characterized by stark binaries of place attachment. These are particularly at times of war. As the geographer Ken Hewitt (1983: 258) has argued, “war [...] mobilizes the highly charged and dangerous dialectic of place attachment: the perceived antithesis of ‘our’ places or homeland and ‘theirs’”. Very often, such polarizations are manufactured discursively through racist and imperial discourses and propaganda which emanate from both formal state and other media sources. These work to produce “an unbridled sentimentalizing of one’s own while dehumanizing the enemy’s people and land” (ibid.). To Hewitt, such binaried constructions “seem an essential step in cultivating readiness to destroy the latter” (1983: 258).

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that the Bush Administration’s ‘war on terror’ rests fundamentally on such dialectical constructions of (particularly urban) place. The essay argues that the discursive construction of the ‘war on terror’ since September 11th 2001 has been deeply marked by attempts to rework imaginative geographies separating the urban places of the US ‘homeland’ and those Arab cities purported to be the sources

of ‘terrorist’ threats against US national interests. Such reworkings of popular and political imaginative geographies have worked by projecting places, and particularly cities, into two mutually exclusive, mutually constitutive, classifications: those, in Bush’s famous phrase, who are by either “with us” or “against us” (sic) (see Graham, 2004).

In a world of intensifying transnational migration, transport and media flows, and economic globalization, however, such attempts at constructing a mutually exclusive binary – a securitized ‘inside’ enclosing the urban places of the US Empire’s ‘homeland,’ and an urbanizing ‘outside’ where US military power can preemptively attack places deemed sources of ‘terrorist’ threats – are inevitably ambivalent. Reconstructing imaginative geographies separating a putative urban ‘homeland’ from the ‘terrorist’ spaces requiring US military intervention is thus inseparably bound up with efforts to reshape material and political economic connections between ‘homeland’ and cities and the rest of the world.

Whilst dramatic, these discursive constructions are far from original. In fact they revivify long-established colonial and Orientalist tropes to represent Middle Eastern culture as intrinsically barbaric, infantile, backward or threatening from the point of view of Western colonial powers. Arab cities, moreover, have often been represented by, Western powers as dark, exotic, labyrinthine, and structureless places that need to be ‘unveiled’ for the production of ‘order’ through the superior scientific and military technologies of the occupying West. By burying “disturbing similarities between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in a discourse that systematically produces the Third World as Other”, such

Orientalism deploys considerable ‘symbolic violence’ (Gusterson, 1999). This is done, crucially, in order to produce both “the Third World” and “the West” (ibid.).

The Bush Administration’s language of moral absolutism is, in particular, deeply Orientalist. It works by separating "the civilised world" – the ‘homeland’ cities which must be ‘defended’ – from the "dark forces", the "axis of evil", and the “terrorists nests” of Islamic cities, which are alleged to sustain the ‘evildoers’ which threaten the health, prosperity, and democracy of the whole of the ‘free’ world (Tuastad, 2003). The result of such imaginative geographies is an ahistorical, essentialised, and deeply Orientalist projection of Arab civilization that is very easily worked to "recycle the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations to stir up ‘America’ against the foreign devil" (Said, 2003: vi). The Orientalist notions of racial worth that helped to shape the real and imagined geographies of Western colonialism are thus being reworked as fundamental foundations for the ‘war’ on terror’ (Gregory, 2004a). As Paul Gilroy suggests, these:

“old, modern notions of racial difference appear once again to be active within the calculus [of the ‘war on terror’] that tacitly assigns differential value to lives lost according to their locations and supposed racial origins or considers that some human bodies are more easily and appropriately humiliated, imprisoned, shackled, starved and destroyed than others” (2003: 263).

Discourses of ‘terrorism’ are crucially important in sustaining such differential values and binaried notions (Collins and Glover, 2002). Central here is the principle of the absolute eternality of the ‘terrorist’ -- the inviolable inhumanity and shadowy, monster-like status of those deemed to be actual or dormant ‘terrorists’ or those sympathetic to them (Puar and Rai, 2002). The unbound diffusion of terrorist labeling within the rhetoric of the ‘war on terror’, moreover, works to allow virtually any political opposition to the sovereign power of the US and its allies to be condemned as ‘terrorist’ or addressed through emergency ‘anti-terrorist’ legislation. Protagonists of such opposition are thus dehumanized, demonized, and, above all, delegitimized. “Without defined shape, or determinate roots”, Derek Gregory writes that the mantle of ‘terrorism’ can now be “be cast over *any* form of resistance to sovereign power” (2003: 219, original emphasis).

In such a context, this essay traces in detail the ways in which the deep-rooted dialectics of place attachment, and the imaginative geographies that fuel them, are at the very heart of the ‘war on terror’. To achieve this, three particular case studies are developed. These address especially important ‘sites’ of place construction in the ‘war on terror’: the reworking of imaginative geographies of US cities as ‘homeland’ spaces which must be reengineered to address supposed imperatives of ‘national security’ ; the intensified imaginative construction of Islamic cities as little more than ‘terrorist nest’ targets to soak up US military firepower ; and the increasingly integrated treatment of both ‘homeland’ and ‘target’ cities within contemporary US military doctrine and technoscience.

### **Re-imagining ‘Homeland’ Cities as National Security Spaces**

"Everything and everywhere is perceived as a border from which a potentially threatening Other can leap" (Hage, 2003: 86)

The first key element in the imaginative geographies of the ‘war on terror’ is an appeal by the Bush Administration to securitize the everyday urban spaces and technics of a newly ‘rebordered’ US ‘homeland’ (Lutz, 2002). Here, discourses of ‘security,’ emphasizing endless threats from an almost infinite range of people, places and technologies, are being used to justify a massive process of state building. Vast efforts are being made by US political, military and media elites in order to “spread [...] generalized promiscuous anxiety through the American populace, a sense of imminent but inexact catastrophe” lurking just beneath the surface of normal, technologized, (sub)urbanized, everyday life in the US (Raban, 2004: 7). Despite the unavoidable and continuing interconnections between US cities and more or less distant elsewhere, "the rhetoric of ‘insides’ needing protection from external threats in the form of international organizations is pervasive" (Dalby, 2000: 5). This reimagining of ‘homeland’ cities involves four simultaneous processes.

#### The ‘Domestic Front’ in the “War on Terror”



First, the homeland security drive is being organized as a purported attempt to protect those ‘insides’ -- the bodies and everyday spaces of valued, non threatening, full US citizens -- from demonized Others apparently lurking, with a wide range of threatening technologies and pathogens, both within and outside US national space. Fuelled by the larger mobilization of ‘terrorist’ discourses discussed above, and the blurring of the boundary separating law enforcement from state military activity (Kraska, 2001), this process has "activite[d] a policing of points of vulnerability against an enemy who inheres within the space of the US" (Passavant and Dean, 2002, cited in Gregory, 2003). The ‘enemy’ here are constructed as dormant ‘terrorists’ and their sympathizers, a rhetoric that easily translates -- in the context of the wider portrayals of the ‘homeland at war’ against secretive and unknowable Others -- into an overall crackdown on criticism and dissent, or those simply deemed to be insufficiently ‘patriotic’. As a result, to put it mildly, “cosmopolitan estrangement and democracy-enriching dissent are not being prized as civic assets“ in the US (or UK) in the early twenty first century (Gilroy, 2003: 266).

A ‘domestic front’ has thus been drawn in Bush’s ‘war on terror’. Sally Howell and Andrew Shryock (2003) call this a "cracking down on diaspora". This process involves deepening state surveillance and violence against those seen to harbor ‘terrorist threats,’ combined with radically increased efforts to ensure the effective filtering power of national and infrastructural borders. After decades where the business press and politicians endlessly celebrated the supposed collapse of boundaries through neoliberal globalization, "in both political debates and policy practice, borders are very much back

in style" (Andreas, 2003: 1). Once again, Western nations -- and the securitized cities now seen once again to sit hierarchically within their dominant territorial patronage -- are being normatively imagined as bounded, organized spaces with closely controlled, and filtered, relationships with the supposed terrors of the outside world. In the US, for example, national immigration, border control, transportation, and social policy strategies have been remodeled since 9/11 in an:

"attempt to reconstitute the [United States] as a bounded area that can be fortified against outsiders and other global influences. In this imagining of nation, the US ceases to be a constellation of local, national, international, and global relations, experiences, and meanings that coalesce in places like New York City and Washington DC; rather, it is increasingly defined by a 'security perimeter' and the strict surveillance of borders" (Hyndman, 2003: 2).

### Securitising Everyday Spaces and Systems

Second, as well as further militarizing national territorial borders, the US homeland security drive is also attempting to reengineer the basic everyday systems and spaces of US urban life -- even if this is sometimes a stealthy and invisible process. As a result, urban public life is being saturated by 'intelligent' surveillance systems, checkpoints, 'defensive' urban design and planning, and intensifying security (Johnson, 2002; Williams, 2003). In the wake of 9/11, and the Homeland Security drive, the design of buildings and streets, the management of traffic, the physical planning of cities, migration

and refugee policy, transportation policing, the design of social policies for ethnically diverse cities and neighborhoods, even the lending policies of neighborhood libraries, are being brought within the widening umbrella of US ‘homeland security’.

In cities like Washington DC, completely new (and tellingly titled) ‘urban design and security plans’ have been brought in. These emphasize that one of the most important objectives of public urban planning in such strategic centers is now the ‘hardening’ of all possible terrorist targets. Once again, it seems, geopolitical and strategic concerns are directly shaping the day to day practices of US urban professionals. Jonathan Raban, writing of everyday life in post 9-11 Seattle, captures the palpable effects of this militarization on urban everyday life and landscape:

“To live in America now, at least to live in a port city like Seattle -- is to be surrounded by the machinery and rhetoric of covert war, in which everyone must be treated as a potential enemy until they can prove themselves a friend. Surveillance and security devices are everywhere: the spreading epidemic of razor wire, the warnings in public libraries that the FBI can demand to know that books you’re borrowing, the Humvee laden with troops in combat fatigues, the Coast Guard gun boats patrolling the bay, the pat-down searches and X-ray machines, the nondescript grey boxes equipped with radar antennae, that are meant to sniff pathogens in the air” (2004: 6).

US Cities Within Anti-Cosmopolitan Constructions of 'Homeland'

Third, this attempted reconstruction of national boundaries, as well as being sustained by material and technological investments in and around strategic urban spaces, relies on massive linguistic work (Kaplan, 2003: 85). Tom Ridge, the Homeland Security Secretary, for example, has widely argued that, post 9/11, “the only turf is the turf we stand on” (cited in Kaplan, 2003: 85). This ‘rebordered’ discourse constructs an imaginary, domesticated, singular, and spatially fixed imagined community of US nationhood (Andreas and Biersteker, 2003). Such an imagined community -- tied intrinsically to some purported, familial, ‘turf’ -- centers on valorizing an exclusive, separated and privileged population. It therefore contrasts starkly with previous US state rhetoric which centered on notions of boundless mobility and assimilation (Kaplan, 2003: 86).

Such discourses are central to reimagining the actual and normative geographies of what contemporary US urban life actually consists of or what it might become. Amy Kaplan, in analyzing the languages of ‘Homeland Security’, detects a “decidedly antiurban and anticosmopolitan ring” to this upsurge of nationalism after 9/11 (2003: 88). Paul Gilroy goes further and suggests that the widespread invocation by the Bush Administration, following Huntington (1993), of the idea of a ‘clash of civilizations,’ necessarily “*requires* that cosmopolitan consciousness is ridiculed” in the pronouncements of the US state and the mainstream media (2003: 266, emphasis added). Post 9/11, he diagnoses a

pervasive “inability to conceptualize multicultural and postcolonial relations as anything other than ontological risk and ethnic jeopardy” (ibid. 261).

The very term ‘homeland security’, in fact, serves to rework the imaginative geographies of contemporary US urbanism in important ways. It shifts the emphasis away from complex and mobile diasporic social formations, sustaining large metropolitan areas, towards a much clearer mapping which demarcates clear, essentialized geographies of entitlement and threat. At many scales -- from neighborhoods, through cities and nations to the international -- this separation works to define those citizens who are deemed to warrant value and the full protection of citizenship, and those deemed threatening as real or potential sources of ‘terrorism’ : the targets for the blossoming national security state.

As Amy Kaplan suggests (2003: 84), even the very word ‘homeland’ suggests some “inexorable connection to a place deeply rooted in the past”. It necessarily problematizes the inherently diverse and mobile fabric of the diasporas that actually constitutes the social fabric of US urbanism. Such language offers a “folksy rural quality, which combines a German romantic notion of the folk with the heartland of America to resurrect the rural myth of American identity” (ibid. 88). At the same time, it precludes “an urban vision of America as multiple turfs with contested points of view and conflicting grounds upon which to stand” (ibid. 88).

Such a discourse is particularly problematic in global metropolitan cities like New York, constituted as they are by massive constellations of diasporic social groups. “In what

sense”, asks Kaplan (2003: 84), “would New Yorkers refer to their city as the homeland? Home, yes, but homeland. Not likely”. Ironically, even the grim casualty lists of 9/11 revealed the impossibility of separating some purportedly pure, ‘inside,’ homeland city from the wider international flows that now constitute cities like New York -- even with massive state surveillance and violence. “If it existed, any comfortable distinction between domestic and international, here and there, us and them, ceased to have meaning after that day” (Hyndman, 2003: 1). For, as Tim Watson writes:

“global labor migration patterns have [...] brought the world to lower Manhattan to service the corporate office blocks: the dishwashers, messengers, coffee-cart vendors, and office cleaners were Mexican, Bangladeshi, Jamaican and Palestinian. One of the tragedies of September 11th 2001 was that it took such an extraordinary event to reveal the everyday reality of life at the heart of the global city” (2003: 109).

‘Homeland security’ policies have been associated with a considerable growth in state and non-state violence against immigrant and Arab American groups. Indeed, “the notion of the homeland itself contributes to making the life of immigrants terribly insecure” (Kaplan, 2003: 87). Systematic state repression and mass incarceration have been brought to bear on Arab-American neighborhoods like Dearborn in Detroit -- the first place to have its own, local, office of Homeland Security (Howell and Shryock, 2003). Such Arab-American neighborhoods are now overwhelmingly portrayed in the US national media as “zones of threat”. Arab Americans are widely represented as “clearly being in” their local cities and “with us” (sic), but the point is almost always stressed, as Howell

and Shryock (2002: 444) put it, that “their hearts might still be over there, ‘with them’” (sic). Thousands of US citizens have also effectively been stripped of any notion of value, to be thrown into extra or intra-territorial camps as suspect ‘terrorists’ for potentially indefinite periods of time without trial. More than ever, the discourses and practices of the ‘war on terror’ therefore work to make “‘Arab’ and ‘American’ all but antithetical adjectives” (Watson, 2003). As we shall see shortly, this situation is unmutably bound up with the widespread demonization of Middle Eastern and Arab cities more generally within ‘war on terror’ discourses.

### Everyday Sites and Spaces as Sources of Fear

The final element of the homeland security drive is the production of permanent anxiety around everyday urban spaces, systems, and events that were previously banalized, taken for granted or ignored in US urban everyday life (Luke, 2004). With streams of vague warnings, omnipresent color coded alerts, and endless media coverage of purported threats to US urban life, everyday events, malfunctions or acts of violence in the city -- which would previously have been seen as the results of local social problems, individual pathologies, bureaucratic failings, or simple accidents -- are now widely assumed be the results of ‘terrorist’ action. The ‘homeland’ is thus cast in terms of a constant ‘state of emergency’ (Armitage, 2002). In this the only things that can be guaranteed are new sources of fear and oscillations on Tom Ridge’s color-coded threat monitor. In the process, parked vans, delayed trains, envelopes with white powder, people with packages, ‘Arab’ looking people, colds and flu, low flying aircraft, electricity outages, and subway

derailments, are now sources of mass anxiety. Homeland security, thus depends, ironically, on a radical *insecurity*. This fuels acceptance that the everyday sites and spaces of daily life within the continental US must now be viewed as battlegrounds – the key sites within a new, permanent and boundless war.

Cindi Katz (2004) calls this the "routinization of terror talk and the increasing ordinariness of its physical markers". She argues that such processes generate a radical ontological insecurity because they create pervasive feelings of vulnerability and threat in everyday urban life. In the process, 'terror talk' helps to define reimagined communities of nationhood as well as normative imaginative geographies of 'homeland' and 'target' cities. As Giroux (2003: ix) suggests, "notions of community [in the US] are now organized not only around flag-waving displays of patriotism, but also around collective fears and ongoing militarization of visual culture and public space".

### **‘Terror Cities’: Orientalist Constructions of Arab Urban Places as Military Targets**

Which leads us to our second case study: an analysis of the way in which (selected) Arab cities are being overwhelmingly constructed within 'war on terror' discourses as targets for US military firepower. Far from being isolated from the securitization of US cities, this process is inseparable from it. As Edward Said (2003: xxiii) stressed just before his death, from the point of view of the discursive foundations of both US foreign policy and dominant portrayals of Arabs in the US media, the devaluation and dehumanization of



people in the ‘target’ cities of the Arab world can not be separated from the securitization of the (re)imagined communities in ‘homeland’ ones. As the Iraq invasion was prepared, Said wrote that "without a well-organized sense that these people over there were not like ‘us’ and didn’t appreciate ‘our’ values -- the very core of the Orientalist dogma -- there would have been no war" in Iraq. Thus, crucially, a powerful relation exists:

“between securing the homeland against encroachment of foreign terrorists and enforcing [US] national power abroad. The homeland may contract borders around a fixed space of the nation and nativity, but it simultaneously also expands the capacity of the United States to move unilaterally across the borders of other nations” (Kaplan, 2003: 87).

The discursive construction of selected Arab cities as targets for US military firepower occurs in at least four interrelated ways.

### Vertical Representations of Arab Cities as Collections of Military Targets

First, the voyeuristic consumption by Western publics of the US urban bombing campaigns that have been such a dominant feature of the ‘war on terror’ is itself based on mediated representations where cities are actually constructed as little more than receiving points for the dropping of murderous ordnance. Verticalized web and newspaper maps, for example, have routinely displayed cities like Baghdad as little more than impact points where GPS-targeted bombs and missiles are either envisaged to land, or have landed, are grouped along flat, cartographic surfaces (Gregory, 2004a).

Meanwhile, the weapons' actual impacts on the everyday life for the ordinary Iraqis or Afghanis who are caught up in the bombing, as 'collateral damage', have been both marginalized and violently repressed by the US military. (Most famously this has involved the bombing of Al-Jazeera transmission facilities because they transmitted images of the dead civilians that resulted from the bombing).

In this verticalized imaginative geography, which is strongly linked to the wider history of colonial bombing and repression by Western powers, Arab 'cities' are thus reduced to the:

“places and people you are about to bomb, to targets, to letters on a map or co-ordinates on a visual display. Then, missiles rain down on K-A-B-U-L, on 34.51861N, 69.15222E, but not on the eviscerated city of Kabul, its buildings already devastated and its population already terrorized by years of grinding war” (Gregory 2004b).

Strikingly, the failure to even *count* the 11,000 or so dead Iraqi civilians that had resulted, by September 2004, from the war's bombing campaigns and urban battles (IPSFP, 2004), reveals that the civilians of targeted cities are 'cast out' so that they warrant no legal status or discursive or visual presence (Gregory, 2004b). Their sacrifice can go largely unremarked; their bloody deaths can be blindly unrepresented.

Constructing Arab Cities as 'Terrorist Nests'

Second, such casting out of the lives, and suffering of ordinary civilians, is legitimized and obscured in the 'war on terror' by a wider discourse in which the entire cities of such victims are essentialized as little more than 'factories' or 'nests' sustaining 'terrorists' and 'extremists'. To achieve this, huge discursive and material work is being done by both the US military and the mainstream US media to construct Islamic cities as dehumanized 'terror cities' -- nest-like environments whose very geography undermines the high-tech, orbital, mastery of US forces. For example, as a major battle raged there in April 2004 in which over 600 Iraqi civilians died General Richard Myers, Chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, labeled the whole of Fallujah a dehumanized "rat's nest" or "hornet's nest" of "terrorist resistance" against US occupation that needed to be "dealt with" (quoted in News24.com, 2004).

Such disclosures have been backed up by widespread popular geopolitical representations of Iraqi cities. Derek Gregory (2004b, 2002), for example, analyses how, in their pre-invasion discussions about the threat of 'urban warfare' to US forces in Iraq, mainstream news media like *Time Magazine* repeatedly depicted Orientalized streets where "nothing was what it seemed, where deceit and danger threatened at every turn" and where the US forces' high-tech weapons and surveillance gear were the key to "reveal the traps" and "lift" the Orientalized veil obscuring Iraqi urban places (ibid.).

In the bloody urban battles of 2004 for Saddam City, Fallujah and Najaf the promulgations of the US military forces fighting in Iraq -- and their leaders back in the US proper -- have also routinely blended Islamophobic racism and crude Orientalism. Again, this worked to continually reinforce the perception that these cities are little but 'nests' of terrorist violence that necessitate targeting by superior US surveillance technologies and military firepower which will somehow act to 'cleanse' or redeem the intrinsically terroristic urban places of Iraq. "The Iraqis are sick people and we are the chemotherapy", boasted one US Marine to the *New Statesman* in April 2003. Leavened in here have been widespread invocations of some essentialized 'Arab mind' (see Patai, 1983). "You have to understand the Arab mind", suggested Captain Todd Brown, a company commander with the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division in Baghdad in early December 2003. "The only thing they understand is force -- force, pride and saving face" (quoted in Wilkins, 2003).

Widespread pronouncements of the fighting US soldiers themselves illustrate these imaginative geographies all too clearly. US Marine snipers after the battle of Fallujah, for example, talked exultantly about their 'kills' of "rag-heads" and "sand niggers" in Fallujah (Davis, 2004). Shocked senior British Officers in Iraq -- who's forces are far from blameless in terms of brutality against Iraqi civilians, even alleged -- anonymously -- that American forces often viewed Iraqi civilians "as *untermenschen* [the Nazis' word for subhuman]" (quoted in Rayment, 2004: 4). This view, of course, has been reinforced by the extending list of prison torture scandals that have erupted since the end of the 2003.

Added to these street-level discourses, a large group of professional ‘urban warfare’ commentators, writing regular columns in US newspapers, have routinely projected deeply racist notions implying that the inhabitants of targeted Iraqi cities are merely subhuman pests requiring extermination. An important example comes from the highly influential urban warfare commentator, Ralph Peters, writing in the neo-conservative *New York Post*. To Peters and many like him cities like Fallujah and Najaf are little more than killing zones which challenge the US military to harness its techno-scientific might to sustain hegemony. This must be done, he argues, by killing ‘terrorists’ as rapidly and efficiently -- and with as few US casualties -- as possible. During the battle of Fallujah, Peters (2004a) labeled the entire City a "terror-city" in his column. Praising the US Marines "for hammering the terrorists into the dirt" in the battle, he nevertheless castigated the cease fire negotiations that, he argued, had allowed those ‘terrorists’ left alive to melt back into the civilian population (2004a).

In a later article Peters (2004b) concluded that a military, technological solution was available to US forces that would enable them to ‘win’ such battles more conclusively in the future: killing faster, before any international media coverage is possible. "This is the new reality of combat," he wrote. "Not only in Iraq. But in every broken country, plague pit and terrorist refuge to which our troops have to go in the future" (Peters, 2004b). Arguing that the presence of "global media" meant that "a bonanza of terrorists and insurgents" were allowed to "escape’ US forces in Fallujah, US forces, he argued "have to speed the kill" (2004b). By "accelerating urban combat" to "fight within the ‘media

cycle' before journalists sympathetic to terrorists and murderers can twist the facts and portray us as the villains," new technologies were needed, Peters suggested. This was so that "our enemies are overwhelmed and destroyed before hostile cameras can defeat us. If we do not learn to kill very, very swiftly, we will continue to lose slowly" (Peters, 2004b).

### Othering by Simulation I: 'Urban Warfare' Video Games

"In a world being torn apart by international conflict, one thing is on everyone's mind as they finish watching the nightly news: 'Man, this would make a great game!'" (Jenkins, 2003: 18).

Third, the construction of Arab cities as targets for US military firepower now sustains a large industry of computer gaming and simulation. Such simulations -- which are created especially to create positive images for the US military amongst younger computer game users -- "propel the player into the world of the gaming industry's latest fetish: modern urban warfare" (DelPiano, 2004). They work to further reinforce imaginary geographies equating Islamic cities with 'terrorism' and US military intervention.

Such games serve to blur the boundaries separating war from entertainment. Worse still, they demonstrate that "the entertainment industry has assumed a posture of co-operation towards a culture of permanent war" (Deck, 2004). Within such games, Arab cities are represented merely as "collections of objects not congeries of people" (Gregory, 2004b:

201). When people *are* represented they are the shadowy, subhuman, racialized figures of absolutely external ‘terrorists’ to be annihilated repeatedly in sanitized ‘action’ as entertainment or military training (or both). Andrew Deck (2004) argues that the proliferation of urban warfare games based on actual, ongoing, US military interventions in Arab cities, works to “call forth a cult of ultra-patriotic xenophobes whose greatest joy is to destroy, regardless of how racist, imperialistic, and flimsy the rationale” for the simulated battle.

The US Army -- which now brands itself as "the world's premier land force" -- itself works hard and at many levels to demonize Arab urbanism *per se* through the medium of video games. In fact it is now the world's biggest developer of video games which it now deliberately deploys as aids to training and recreation amongst US soldiers and the generation of both recruits and revenue (Gaudiosi, 2004).

The products of this work are dominated by scenarios which depict US soldiers fighting dark, animalistic figures in highly unrealistic portrayals of supposedly Arab cities. Here, once again, the only role for the everyday sites and spaces of the city is as environments for military engagement. “Cars are used as bombs, bystanders become victims [although they die without spilling blood], houses become headquarters, apartments become lookout points, and anything to be strewn in the street becomes suitable cover” (DelPiano, 2004). Indeed, the actual physical geographies of Arab cities are being digitized to provide the three-dimensional ‘battlespace’ for each game. One games developer boasts that “we’ve built a portion of the downtown area of a large Middle

Eastern capital city where we [sic] have a significant presence today” (cited in Deck, 2004).

These representations, of course, resonate strongly with the pronouncements of military urban warfare specialists in the wider media like those of Ralph Peters discussed above. They also blur with increasing seamlessness into news reports about the actual Iraq war. Kuma Reality Games, for example, which has actually *sponsored* Fox news’s coverage of the ‘war on terror’ in the US, uses this sponsorship to promote an urban combat game. , In their words, this centers on US Marines fighting “militant followers of radical Shiite cleric Muqtaqa al-Sadr in the filthy urban slum that is Sadr city” (quoted in Deck, 2004).

Not to be outdone, the US Army itself now gives games such as *America’s Army* -- with its simulations of ‘counter terror’ warfare in densely packed Islamic cities in a fictional country of ‘Zekistan’ -- free to millions over the Internet as an aid to recruitment . "The mission" of America’s Army, writes Steve O’Hagan (2004):

"is to slaughter evildoers, with something about ‘liberty’ [...] going on in the back ground [...]. These games may be ultra-realistic down to the caliber of the weapons, but when bullets hit flesh people just crumple serenely into a heap. No blood. No exit wounds. No screams"

*America’s Army* has been followed up by the even more elaborate game, *Full Spectrum Warrior*, another ex-military training video game in which US forces again wage urban warfare in simulations of Middle Eastern cities whilst this time dispensing racist and



Islamophobic expletives. Even some video game reviewers have commented that “this game would have been fine without the tawdry 4 letter words and negative racist remarks” from the simulated US soldiers (Peterson, 2004). Such racist remarks have done little to inhibit the game’s popularity, however. Writing in a chat room on the neo-conservative FreeRepublic.Com, one reviewer of the game gushes that, “given the current state of the world, it's amazingly relevant, not to mention fun to fire on raghead terrorist wanna-be's”.

### Othering by Simulation II : ‘Urban Warfare’ Training Sites

Finally, to parallel such virtual, voyeuristic, Othering, US and Western military forces have constructed their own simulations of Islamic cities as targets -- this time in physical space. A chain of 80 mock ‘Islamic’ urban districts have been built across the world since 9/11 designed purely to hone the skills of US forces in fighting and killing in ‘urbanized terrain’. Taking 18 months to construct, these simulated ‘cities’ are then endlessly destroyed and remade in practice assaults that hone the US forces for the ‘real thing’ in sieges such as those in Fallujah. Replete with minarets, pyrotechnic systems, loop-tapes with calls to prayer, donkeys, hired ‘civilians’ in Islamic dress wandering through narrow streets, and olfactory machines to create the smell of rotting corpses, this shadow urban system simulates not the complex cultural, social or physical realities of real Middle Eastern urbanism, but the imaginative geographies of the military and theme park designers that are brought in to design and construct it.

**Constructing ‘Homeland’ and ‘Target’ Cities  
Within U.S. Military Techno-science**

“The [US] Air Force wants to be able to strike mobile and emerging targets in fewer than 10 minutes so that such targets will have no sanctuary from US air power”, Adam Hebert, (2003).

All of which leads neatly to our final case study: an exploration of the dialectical production of ‘homeland’ and ‘target’ cities within US military strategy. In the huge research and development now going on to sustain the ‘war on terror,’ US military doctrine now emphasizes the use of the nation’s unassailable advantages in military techno-science to address, and construct, both homeland cities and the targeted, Arab cities, in completely integrated ways. Both are being emphasized as crucial ‘targets’ within one, singular, urbanizing ‘battlespace’. This is being integrated through the US military’s advances in speed-of-light surveillance, communication and orbital, air and space-based targeting capabilities (the result of what is widely termed the ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ or ‘network-centric warfare’ – see Dillon, 2002; Duffield, 2002, respectively).

Crucially, however, this very integration of geographically-distanced urban sites through military techno-science is being done in a manner which actually inscribes highly divisive, Orientalized, judgements of people’s right to life within the ‘war on terror’ into hard, military systems of control, targeting and, sometimes, (attempted) killing. These

systems, very literally, enable and reinforce the geopolitical and urban architectures of US Empire, with their stark judgements of the value -- or lack of value -- of the urban subjects, and human lives, under scrutiny. The emerging trans-global surveillance and targeting systems of the US military continually work to try and expose all subjects, in both 'homeland' and 'target' domains, to scrutiny. In the 'target' cities where those subjects are deemed to warrant no rights or protections, this exposure is combined with potentially instant, continuous, violence and death.

### "How Technology Will Defeat Terrorism"

By way of demonstrating this argument, let me start by drawing on one particularly clear example of how dialectical imaginative geographies of cities, and the military techno-science of US Empire, are being produced, and imagined, together, by those shaping the direction of US military techno-science. This comes from an article titled "How technology will defeat terrorism" produced in 2002 by Peter Huber and Mark Mills -- two leading U.S. defense analysts closely involved, through their defense company Digital Power Capital, in the 'war on terror'.

Huber and Mills's (2002:25) starting point is that the United States now has "sensing technologies that bring to the battlefield abroad, and to the vast arena of civilian defense here at home, the same wizardry that transformed the mainframe computer into the Palm Pilot, the television tower into the cell phone". From the point of view of 'homeland' cities and systems of cities within US national borders, Huber and Mills argue that this

advantage in electronic sensing capabilities means that, "step by step, cities like New York must now learn to watch and track everything that moves" (ibid. 27). This must happen, they argued, as sophisticated, software-based surveillance systems which use algorithms to automatically surveille massive quantities of data to pre-emptively 'sniff' out for signs of 'terrorist' activity, are woven into the complex everyday technics that constitute urban America,. "In the post-September 11 world," they write, 'smart' computerized systems need to be rolled out to all the infra structural systems of urban America so that US homeland security agencies can "see the plastic explosives in the truck before they detonate, the anthrax before its dispersed, the sarin nerve gas before it gets into the air-conditioning duct" (ibid. 28).

In the 'target' cities and spaces of the Middle East, on the other hand, Huber and Mills stress that similar, automated systems of sensing and surveillance must also be seamlessly integrated into the high-tech US military machine. Rather than pinpointing and reducing threats, however, the purpose of these systems, this time, is to continuously project death and destruction to pinpointed locations in the cities and spaces that have discursively been constructed as targets for US military power in the 'war on terror'. "We really *do* want an Orwellian future not in Manhattan, but in Kabul," they argue. Their prognosis is stark and dualistic:

"Terrorist wars will continue, in one form or another, for as long as we live. [...] We are destined to fight a never-ending succession of micro-scale battles, which will require us to spread military resources across vast expanses of empty land and penetrate deep into the shadows of lives lived

at the margins of human existence. Their conscripts dwell in those expanses and shadows. Our soldiers don't, and can't for any extended period of time. What we have instead is micro-scale technology that is both smarter and more expendable than their fanatics, that is more easily concealed and more mobile, that requires no food and sleep, and that can endure even harsher conditions" (ibid. 29)

Saturating adversary cities and territories with millions of 'loitering' surveillance and targeting devices, intimately linked into global surveillance and targeting systems, thus becomes the invisible and unreported shadow of the high-profile, technologically similar, 'homeland' security systems erected within and between the cities of the US mainland. To Huber and Mills, the United State's "longer-term objective must be to infiltrate their [sic] homelands electronically, to the point where we can listen to and track anything that moves", where the 'their' refers to the 'terrorists' inhabiting the targeted cities (ibid. 30). Then, when purported 'targets' are detected, U.S. forces:

"can then project destructive power precisely, judiciously, and from a safe distance week after week, year after year, for as long as may be necessary. [...] Properly deployed at home, as they can be, these technologies of freedom will guarantee the physical security on which all our civil liberties ultimately depend. Properly deployed abroad, they will destroy privacy everywhere we need to destroy it.[...] At home and abroad, it will end up as their sons against our silicon. Our silicon will win" (ibid, 31-34).

Technophilic Unveilings of ‘Homeland’ and ‘Target’ Cities

Strikingly, in Huber and Mills’s scenario, political judgements about the (lack of) value of human life in the demonized cities and spaces that have been so powerfully (re)constructed in ‘war on terror’ discourses, is actually maintained and policed through automated surveillance and killing systems. For here the disposability of life in such ‘target’ cities is maintained continuously by the ongoing presence of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (or UCAVs) armed with missiles. These weapons can be launched at short notice once the surveillance webs that saturate the ‘target’ cities detects some notional ‘target’.

Far from being some fanciful military futurology from Huber and Mills’ technophilic fantasies, these principles are actually directly shaping the design of new US military systems which are already under development or even deployment. Thus, on the one hand, as already mentioned, the cities and urban corridors within US national borders are being wired up with a vast range of automated sensors which are designed to detect and locate a whole spectrum of potentially ‘terrorist’ threats. On the other hand, the Pentagon’s R and D outfit, DARPA (the Defense Applications Research and Projects Agency) are now developing the sorts of massive, ‘loitering’ surveillance grids to try and ‘unveil’ the supposedly impenetrable and labyrinthine landscapes of closely built Middle Eastern cities. In a new program labeled “Combat Zones That See” (or CTS), DARPA (2003) is developing systems of micro-cameras and sensors that can be scattered discretely across both circling UCAVs and built urban landscapes that automatically

scan millions of vehicles and human faces for ‘known targets’ and record any event deemed to be ‘unusual’. “The ability to track vehicles across extended distances is the key to providing actionable intelligence for military operations in urban terrain”, the brief for the Program argues. “Combat Zones that See will advance the state of the art for multiple-camera video tracking to the point where expected tracking length reaches city-sized distances” (DARPA, 2003).

Befitting the definition of Middle Eastern ‘target’ cities within US military doctrine as zones where human life warrants little protection or ornamentation “actionable’ here is most likely to be translated in practice -- Israeli style -- as automated or near-automated aerial attempts at killing the ‘targeted’ person(s). Because urban density in target cities is seen “to render “stand-off sensing from airborne and space-borne platforms ineffective” (DARPA, 2003), CTS’s main role will be to hold even targets within densely urbanized spaces ‘at risk’ from near-instant targeting and destruction from GPS-guided weapons. In US military jargon this is termed “compressing the kill chain” -- a process which “closes the time delay between sensor and shooter” to an extent that brings “persistent area dominance” (or “PAD”) even over and within dense megacities like Baghdad (Hebert, 2003).

Since 2002, for the first time, fleets of identical US unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have indeed patrolled both the increasingly militarized border of the Southern United States and the cities and frontier lands of the war zones of the Middle East. Identical, that is, except in one crucial respect. For in the latter case these unmanned aircraft have been

armed for the first time with missiles and have undertaken, by remote control, at least 70 assassination raids targeting alleged ‘terrorists’ (and those are unlucky enough to be close by) in Yemen, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The ‘success’ of these aerial and long-distance assassinations has fuelled much broader investments in the development of aerial vehicles and munitions that will combine with CTS-type systems to provide the military holy grail of ‘persistent area dominance’. Massive efforts are already underway to develop such a capability. This effort specifically addresses urban ‘target’ areas through what is being termed, in the jargon, “Total Urban Dominance Layered System” (or TUDLS) (Plenge, 2004). This program, which builds on CTS, will deliver “a family of integrated and complementary vehicles layered over an urban area to provide persistent dominance” (ibid.). In the euphemistic geek-speak of the US military, TUDLS will encompass “long hover and loiter propulsions systems, multi-discriminant sensors and seekers, mini- and micro-air vehicles, mini-lethal and non-lethal warheads, autonomous and man-in-the-loop control algorithms, and a strong interface with the battlespace information network” (Plenge, 2004).

For those unused to the euphemisms here it must be stressed that ‘autonomous control algorithms’ actually means that the flying vehicles, and the computer systems that control them, will, eventually, be designed to take the decisions to kill purported ‘targets’ without any human intervention whatsoever. Entirely robotic attack aircraft or ‘dominators’ are already under development by the US Air Force (Tirpak, 2001). As the blurb from one



manufacturer puts it, “these dominators will be capable of completing the entire kill chain with minimal human involvement” (Plenge, 2004).

### **Conclusions**

This essay has demonstrated some of the ways in which the political, discursive, material and geographical dimensions of the Bush Administration’s ‘war on terror’ rest fundamentally on dialectical constructions of urban place. Such constructions, essentially, invoke both political and public reworkings of imaginative geographies. These are shaped and legitimized to do geopolitical work. Moreover, it has been shown that the dialectical constructions of urban place which underlie the ‘war on terror’ can only really be understood if analysis stretches to cover the *mutually constitutive* representation of both ‘homeland’ and ‘target’ cities. In achieving this unusually broad approach, the current essay allows us to make three brief conclusions.

First, and crucially, there are extremely strong resonances between the dialectical constructions of urban places in official US ‘war on terror’ pronouncements and those in the ‘popular geopolitical’ domains of news media, novels, internet chat rooms, films and, most notable of all, video games. This points to the increasing integration of the prosecution, representation, and imagination of ‘asymmetric’ urban warfare in the early 21st century. The growth of the “military-industrial-media-entertainment network” (Der Derian, 2001) that sustains this blurring is occurring as reporters become ‘embedded’ in urban combat (with the language of “they’re moving out” becoming a language of “we’re

moving out”); theme park designers construct ‘mock’ Islamic cities for US urban combat training; voyeuristic media endlessly ratchet up both fear about attacks in the ‘urban homeland’ and legitimize preemptive war in ‘target cities’; private military corporations soak up huge contracts for both ‘homeland security’ and overseas military aggression; and the military themselves construct Orientalist and racist video games where virtualized Arab cities are experienced as mere environments for the killing of ‘terrorists’ as entertainment for US suburbanites in the ‘homeland’. Importantly, this complex of discourses and representations – themselves the product of deeply militarized popular and political cultures -- work, on the one hand, to problematize urban cosmopolitanism in ‘homeland cities’ and, on the other, to essentialize and reify the social ecologies of ‘target’ cities in profoundly racist ways.

Second, this essay has demonstrated that the production of this highly charged dialectic -- the forging of exclusionary, nationalist, imagined communities and the Othering of whole swathes of our urbanizing planet -- has been a fundamental prerequisite for the legitimisation of the entire ‘war on terror’. Worryingly, such fundamentalist and racist constructions of urban place have their almost exact shadow in the charged dialectics of urban place routinely disseminated by al-Qa’eda itself. Here, however, the ‘targets’ are the ‘infidel,’ ‘Christian,’ or ‘Zionist’ cities of the West or Israel. The sentimentalized spaces of the Islamic ‘homeland’, meanwhile, are to be violently ‘purified’ of Western presence in order to create a transnational Islamic space or *umma* which systematically excludes all diversity and Otherness through continuous, murderous force.

The real tragedy of the 'war on terror', then, is that it has closely paralleled al-Qa'eda in invoking homogeneous and profoundly exclusionary notions of 'community' as a way of legitimizing massive violence based on this charged place dialectic and hypermasculine notions of asymmetric war (Gilroy, 2003). In so doing, the 'war on terror' has worked to construct a self reinforcing cycle of terrorist atrocity and counter-terrorist atrocity. Once set in train, as we see in both Iraq and in Israel-Palestine, such cycles are extraordinarily difficult to reverse. As Zulaika (2003, 198) suggests:

"is that such a categorically ill-defined, perpetually deferred, simple minded Good-versus-Evil war ['against terror'] echoes and re-creates the very absolutist mentality and exceptionalist tactics of the insurgent terrorists. By formally adopting the terrorists' own game – one that by definition lacks rules of engagement, definite endings, clear alignments between enemies and fiends, or formal arrangements of any sort, military, political, legal, or ethical – the inevitable danger lies in reproducing it endlessly" .

Finally, the imaginative geographies that run through 'war on terror' discourses, which stress separateness and the total difference between 'homeland' and 'target' cities, are being overlaid by much more complex geographies of connection and disconnection. Thus, a revived Orientalism is used to remake imaginative geographies of 'inside' and 'outside' just as a wide range of processes demonstrate how redundant such binaries now are. On the one hand, the construction of 'homeland cities' as endlessly vulnerable spaces open without warning to an almost infinite range of threats, actually works to

*underline* the integration of such spaces into the manifold flows and processes of globalization. On the other, the techno-scientific systems that actually allow US military forces to undertake trans-global military operations as part of the ‘war on terror,’ increasingly treat ‘home’ and ‘target’ domains as a single, trans-national, and increasingly urban ‘battlespace.’

As we saw in our third case study, however, the crucial difference here is that the judgements about the value of the urban subjects that are now under scrutiny in both sets of cities – shaped by Orientalist and ‘terrorist’ Othering -- could not be more different. In ‘homeland’ cities, to be sure, there is intensifying surveillance and (attempted) social control, the endless ‘terror talk’, and highly problematic clampdowns and potentially indefinite incarcerations for the thousands of people deemed to display the signifiers of real or ‘dormant’ terrorists. In the ‘targeted’ urban spaces of the Arab world, meanwhile, systems are currently being designed which will actually be weapons of automated, continuous, assassination.

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